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A LOYAL LITTLE MAID





"BETSEY REGARDED HERSELF CRITICALLY IN THE
MIRROR."

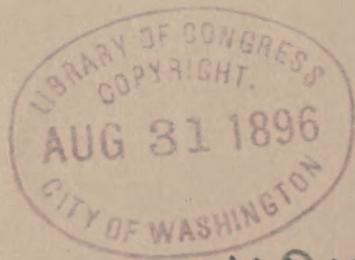
A LOYAL LITTLE MAID

✓ BY
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Illustrated by Amy M. Sacker



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A LOYAL LITTLE MAID.

I.

BETSEY jumped ashore at the Philipse landing and moored her canoe to the stump of the old sycamore. Familiar as the scene was to her, she paused for a moment to drink in its beauty. Opposite, the Palisades arose above the bright waters of the Hudson, their precipitous sides, clad with autumnal foliage, presenting an unbroken wall of splendid color, of manifold gradations, in the haze of Indian summer. On this side of the river, nature gave place to painstaking cultivation. A strip of shingly beach, bordered by stately yew-trees, merged into a wide expanse of velvet lawn, dotted with rare shrubbery. On the summit of its gentle slopes stood Manor Hall, the residence of the Philipse family. Built in the Dutch style of architecture, with galleries and a flat balustraded roof, massive half doors brought from Holland, and wide, pillared

porches with bull's-eye lights, it was esteemed the finest mansion on the banks of the Hudson. A thrifty apple orchard lay between the house and the high road — or river road, as it was usually called — that followed the course of the Hudson from the town of New York, seventeen miles distant, to the little Dutch settlement of Albany, near the head of navigation.

The fortunes of the Philipse family had run in a high and unbroken tide since the days when their gracious Majesties, William and Mary, had been pleased to erect the Manor of Philipsburgh, which, according to the Royal Charter, was “to be holden of the King, in free and common soccage, its lords yielding, rendering and paying therefore, yearly and every year, on the feast-day of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the fort in New York, the annual rent of £4 12s.”

In the years that followed the Royal grant, by purchase and by marriage with heiresses, so many broad acres were added to the original demesne, that when that young heir — known amongst the Dutch as the Yonkheer * — who

* For whom the present town of Yonkers (Yonk-heer's) is named.



built Manor Hall came to his majority, the estate equaled in extent a prince's realm. It was said, indeed, that increase of this domain had become a mania in the Philipse family; certain it was that no generation passed that a considerable "part and parcel" of land was not added to the Manor of Philipsburgh. Yet this apparently unbroken prosperity may have had its flaw. Upon the completion of Manor Hall the Yonkheer gave a great ban-

quet. In the midst of the merrymaking, an Indian appeared on the threshold and spoke words that, mysterious as the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast, was said to lie with terrible foreboding on the secret heart of each and every descendant of the Yonkheer.

The present Lord Philipse — or Colonel Philipse, as he was usually called — may have been, at heart, as loyal to his Majesty, King George III., as was his ancestor, the recipient of the bounty of their Majesties, William and Mary. But this was a time when prudent folk took heed to their words and ways; for evil days had fallen upon the land. A murmuring faction had arisen against the so-called tyrannical course of the Ministry and Parliament; and, ere long, disaffection had made such progress as to reach, from petition and remonstrance, to an armed attempt at throwing off the allegiance to the mother country. Although the popular English belief, as publicly expressed by my Lord, the Earl of Sandwich, was that "all Yankees are cowards," the course of events in what was still, in British parlance, the "insurrection," since the first shot was fired at Concord Bridge a year ago, had not

borne unvarying testimony to this opinion. Loyal adherents to the crown there undoubtedly were, who would have laid down life and fortune in the royal cause. But there were others who, whatever their party predilections, held their own interests paramount, and deemed it wise to await a little longer the progress of affairs before declaring themselves openly on either side. To this class belonged the present owner of the Manor of Philipsburgh.

Frederick Philipse had no mind to have his fine house burnt over his head, his lands despoiled and himself haled to the gallows, seated on a coffin with a rope around his neck—even if the farce went no farther,—all of which catastrophes would belike befall him if he were convicted by the British of any overt act of rebel sympathy. While, on the other hand, the leader of the insurgents was known to hold the Tories—as those of Royalist sympathies were called by the opposing faction—in particular detestation, deeming them a constant menace to the American cause, and openly referring to them as “abominable pests of society,” and “execrable parricides.” In the remote event of the provincials gaining the ascendancy, Mr.

Washington, who was known to be a person of much decision of character, would unquestionably follow up this vigorous language with still more forcible action. So Frederick Philipse, being a man to whom temporizing was easy and natural, held himself in a nice balance between the contending forces, ready, at any conclusive happening, to drop gently into the camp of either party.

It looked as though the decisive moment had at last arrived. The preceding July, the provincials had burnt their ships behind them by a formal Declaration of Independence. Repeated disaster had since followed their military operations; after meeting with a signal defeat on Long Island, they had skulked off, under cover of the night, to New York, where they were speedily fallen upon by the British. After a brief encounter near the landing on East River, known as Kip's Bay,* in which the Yankees exhibited all their expected cowardice, they were chased out of town, their pursuers blowing their bugles as on a fox-chase, as far as the hill on which lay Mr. Murray's farm.† Here the

* Near the foot of what is now 34th Street.

† Now Murray Hill.

good lady of the house had spread an elaborate repast for the British officers, which proved so appetizing that the pursuit was given over to its enjoyment. The scattered provincials took refuge among the hills to which the lower banks of the Hudson rise; here the officers at last succeeded in rallying them, and at Harlem Heights an entrenched camp was thrown up, and the commander-in-chief established his headquarters.

It chanced that Miss Philipse had been shut up in New York throughout the progress of these exciting events, having gone thither on a visit before the tide of combat reached the town. An elder sister had married Col. Beverly Robinson, a Virginian by birth, and a gentleman of wealth and consideration. Susannah Robinson had been dead several years, but Miss Philipse kept up the long established custom of frequent visits to the hospitable mansion in the Battery, out of affectionate regard for her sister's children. Of late, these visits had been longer and more frequent. Colonel Robinson had openly given all the weight of his influence to the Royalist cause; he was known to be in active communication

with the Royalist governor, and other representatives of his Majesty, and his house was the recognized headquarters of the strong Tory element in New York. Miss Philipse, though cast in gentlest mould, was regarded as a person of much decision of character, and it was no secret that she found, in the Royalist circle at Colonel Robinson's, a more congenial atmosphere than that afforded by her brother's non-committal policy at home.

It was in eager anticipation of Miss Philipse's return to Manor Hall that Betsey Schuyler had paddled up the river from her own home, some miles distant, where she had been living in the care of an old servant, since her father and brother had joined the Continental Army.

Betsey had just passed her fourteenth birthday, but, despite the disparity of years, the friendship between her and Miss Philipse was deep and true, holding, on the side of the latter, something of the maternal element that is part of every good woman's love, and which, in this instance, was particularly called forth by the circumstances of the girl's motherless life. Though she smiled at and even sometimes gently chid the worship of which she was the

object, she could not but be touched by the unquestioning faith, and responsive to an affection so deep and true and wholly unselfish as scarcely to need years to mature. "Miss Philipse said so," was, to Betsey, all sufficient ground for any belief. "Miss Philipse could do no wrong!" was part of the girl's very creed.

The influence of beauty and of a rare magnetic charm was felt by all in the presence of Mary Philipse; but there was another reason for Betsey's loving reverence, beside personal attractions, or even the tendency, not uncommonly displayed by a young and impressionable girl, of seeing, in a woman older and stronger than herself, the very ideal of womanhood. Betsey had never read any fairy tales; she knew nothing of novels; poetry was an unknown realm to her. The only books at her home were the Bible and an old copy of Fox's "Book of Martyrs," and she could scarcely spell her way through them, for, though her parents were gentlefolk, in those days a girl's education was held of scant account.

There was a story to which, on some long-forgotten day, she had hearkened, that was at once a fairy tale to the imagination of the child

she still was in years, and a romance to the half-wistful, half-timid fancy of the girl whose dreams were beginning to take on the tinge of womanhood.

Once upon a time, many years ago, there lived a princess whose grace and beauty were the theme of every tongue. Many suitors sought her hand, but in vain, till there journeyed to her realm the prince of a far-off country. He was rich and handsome, and of gentlest courtesy to high and low. Even brave men spoke, with bated breath, of a strength that was as the strength of ten, of a more than mortal valor. A great ball was given at the royal palace, and in the stately steps of the first dance the prince and princess looked at each other with the love light in their eyes.

But the mission on which the prince was bound brooked no tarrying, and on the morrow he took leave of the princess, saying that in seven days he would come again. But the promised time had long expired when he once more drew rein at the palace gates. It was to find the princess gone! Whence, he did not seek to follow, nor did he stay to question or parley, but, putting spurs to his snow-white

steed, rode on to his home in the far South, and he and the princess never met again.

The princess's name was Mary Philipse. The prince's was George Washington.

It was not merely that Betsey would have shrunk from any impulse of curiosity regarding that episode of her friend's youth, as from a sacrilege, — she did not want to know more concerning it. The knowledge of the fairy tale without the proper ending, — “and they lived happy ever after;” of the sweet beginning of a romance that was never finished, added the last touch of grace and reverence to her love for her friend. To have let in the light of day upon the precious secret would have been to have the fairy tale made real, and so lose its reality; to have met the hero and heroine of the romance at the dinner-table and found them middle-aged people, fat and bald and stupid. By some subtle chord of sympathy Miss Philipse understood all this, and the bond between the child and woman was the closer and finer because of it.

It was the most momentous event of Betsey's life when she met — nay, actually talked with, the fairy prince, the hero of romance! It was

still through the glamor of the ideal that she beheld him, rather than in the harsher light of reality — although he was become the most important personage in the Colonies — the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Happily for Betsey, General Washington more than realized the fondest dreams of girlish imagination. General Schuyler's house was not far from the provincial camp at Harlem Heights, and Philip Schuyler, who had recently been appointed to the command of General Washington's body-guard — a mounted escort of twenty young gentlemen of family — snatched a few minutes from his duties to visit his home and the little sister from whom he had been separated a twelvemonth. Yielding to Betsey's eager pleading, he took her to see the entrenched camp.

It was spread out over a peninsula half a mile in width, that lay between the Hudson River on the west and the Harlem River on the east. On three sides precipitous walls or pathless crags formed a natural defence; the only approach was from the south, where a narrow highway wound up a steep declivity known as Breakneck Hill. This quarter was

guarded by three parallel lines of fortifications, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile apart. A little beyond the third parallel was the big square house of Col. Roger Morris, now occupied by General Washington and his military family. On the brow of the hill, commanding a wide stretch of the river, stood Fort Washington. At the left of a path that zigzagged from the landing near the foot of Breakneck Hill to the highway was a little spring, that had been a favorite haunt of Betsey's in more peaceful times. Its margin was now trampled and muddy, and the grass worn away for many feet around. It was here she stood and looked with absorbing interest upon the strange scene into which war had converted the familiar rocky meadows of the Jumel place.

It was a motley settlement stretched out behind the fortifications, consisting of almost every imaginable kind of rude shelter that could be thrown up to serve as protection against the autumn winds that already swept keenly over the exposed plains. Some of the huts were constructed of boards or sail-cloth, or partly of both ; others were of stone or turf, or

of birch or other brush. Most of them had evidently been put together in a careless hurry, but here and there was one whose construction evinced considerable skill, boasting doors and windows elaborately woven out of withes and reeds. A few men were lounging about the settlement, smoking or playing cards, but the greater number were at work upon the ditches or abatis. None of the soldiers wore what could properly be called a uniform, and no considerable number were dressed alike. Men with lean, sinewy figures and shrewd faces, bronzed to the color of mahogany, wore check shirts and breeches of homespun. The plain tight-fitting blue coats of the New England farmers, with their hats decorated with a turkey-cock feather,* the parting gift of some Yankee sweetheart, mingled with the white frocks and round hats of the men from Maryland and Pennsylvania. But what especially attracted Betsey's attention was a number of tall men — she had never before seen such an assemblage of men of extraordinary height — clad in ash-colored shirts, with double capes ornamented

* Whence Yankee Doodle, —

“Stuck a feather in his hat.”

with fringe, that reached to the middle of the thigh; fringed leggins and gay moccasins completed the picturesque attire.

All at once she saw a tall man — taller than any of the Virginia riflemen — who was silently watching the men at work with the spades and pickaxes. No need to question who he was, there could be no mistaking General Washington, even by one who had never seen him before. Nevertheless, Betsey tightened her clasp of her brother's hand and whispered:

“Is it General Washington?”

“Yes, it is his Excellency,” answered Philip, in a low voice, saluting General Washington, who just then glanced in their direction.

He approached with a firm, graceful step, force and dignity in each line of the stately figure and handsome bronzed face, and Betsey had time to note every detail of his appearance. He wore a blue coat, with buff-colored facings, and two brilliant epaulettes; buff-colored small-clothes and a three-cornered hat, with a black cockade, completed his attire. An elegant small sword was by his side, and boots and spurs showed him ready, at a moment's warning, to mount his charger. His hair, powdered

and turned back from his forehead, was tied with a black ribbon. He had a strong, but mobile mouth, the lips slightly compressed, and earnest, far-seeing eyes — to which sleep was evidently a stranger — in whose gray-blue depths was an expression of resignation, almost of sadness.

He looked down upon the young girl with kindly scrutiny.

“Whom have we here?” he asked, and, with the gentle courtesy of his tone, Betsey’s clasp of her brother’s hand relaxed. Reverence, even to awe, she would always feel in the presence of General Washington, but not fear.

“Betsey Schuyler, your Excellency,” she answered, and dropped a curtsy.

“And a loyal little maid, I make no doubt. Your father and your brother would answer for that, even if those blue eyes did not tell their own tale,” he said, with a bow in which courtly grace blended with soldierly dignity. Then, with a smile whose memory lingered like a benediction, he walked on toward the outer line of fortifications, and the child’s eyes, blinded with unconscious tears, followed him till he was out of sight.

Ardent little patriot as Betsey had heretofore been, it is not too much to say that, after that memorable meeting, she would gladly have died for her country or for General Washington, she could not have told which. Somehow, in her crude, childish understanding, the one seemed to stand for the other.

II.

As Betsey now hastened across the lawn, toward Manor Hall, her eager eyes were fastened upon the centre window in the upper tier of small paned casements. There it was Miss Philipse's habit to muse, gazing on the broad stretch of water and woodland. But no sweet, fair face and welcoming wave of the hand greeted Betsey to-day.

She passed around the house, and entered by the front porch. Through the closed door of the drawing-room, on the left of the entrance, came the murmur of voices, and she paused with mingled hesitation at interrupting a conversation and childish diffidence of strangers. The door on the opposite side of the hall was open, and, after a moment's hesitation, she entered the dining-room, and seated herself in the deep embrasure of the window. Presently the drawing-room door opened, and the murmur resolved into the voices of two men. One was that of Colonel Philipse; as Betsey recognized

that of the other, she sprang from the window-seat into the middle of the room, and looked wildly about for some chance of escape.

Col. Roger Morris, the owner of the great Jumel place, was a familiar figure in the neighborhood, and had been a frequent visitor at Betsey's home, till the outbreak of the war enlisted his sympathies and those of General Schuyler on opposite sides of the struggle. For no reason of which she could give a rational account, he had inspired Betsey, from her very babyhood, with a vague, but awful terror, which his grotesque ugliness of form and feature was inadequate to explain. This instinctive antipathy had not lessened with years, so that even now, "grown up" though she was, she could not look upon Colonel Morris's stout, square figure, with the bowed legs and bull neck, the fiery face and protuberant eyes, without being overwhelmed as with the terror of the nursery bugaboo. The present emergency had come upon her too suddenly for her to restrain the old wild impulse of flight.

But which way to flee? By the one door, she would fling herself into the very arms of Colonel Morris; by the other, that connected

with the kitchen, she must run against the servant, whose footsteps were already heard in the passage. It was over in an instant — the blind terror, the wild leap, the flash of thought, and a plunge toward the old Dutch clock in the



corner. Its case was large enough to conceal a slender girl. Pushing aside the heavy leaden weights, Betsey whisked inside and drew the door after her — not a moment too soon.

The conversation between the two gentlemen was upon indifferent topics, till the servant left

the room. Then Colonel Morris, apparently resuming a discussion of absorbing interest, said, in lowered tones and with an involuntary glance about the apartment :

“You are sure that the passage is unobstructed? If it has not been used since the days of the Yonkheer, there might be danger from foul air.”

“I have examined it myself,” answered Colonel Philipse, in an evident sulky tone. “It is in as good condition as when it was excavated.”

“I suppose the original idea of a subterranean passage was to provide a means of escape against an attack of the Indians?” suggested Colonel Morris.

Phlipse briefly assented.

“The wisdom of your ancestor was yours in providing against a like danger from — the rebels,” went on the other, in a significant tone. “So prominent and uncompromising a Royalist as Colonel Philipse is necessarily exposed to the ill will of the insurgents.”

“I should not have told you of the passage if I had not been on your side,” returned Philipse, with a furtively resentful air.

“We do not doubt your good-will,” rejoined Colonel Morris, “although I must confess that I was somewhat under the impression that it was by a fortunate slip that I learnt of this passage, of whose existence you and your sister were the only living persons cognizant. We are showing our reliance upon your loyalty in the most conclusive manner by depending upon your coöperation in this scheme.” He spoke in the bluff tones that were generally regarded as the exponent of a rugged honesty and blunt good-will. But there were those who, having in some wise given offence to Roger Morris, had lived to hold a different opinion of what that open manner covered. “Besides,” he went on, “any doubts that you have naturally felt as to the expediency of showing your hand may well be set at rest by recent events. The rebels are disheartened by defeat. All their heavy artillery was left behind in the flight from New York ; they are without military stores for offensive operations, or camp supplies to lie long upon the defensive. Local jealousies distract the rabble they call their army ; its two best regiments — the Marblehead fishermen and Morgan’s Virginia riflemen — are in con-

stant broils. Now is the time to strike a decisive blow. The insurrection is stamped out once we have laid our hands upon its backbone, George Washington. Ha! what was that?" Colonel Morris started, and threw a glance over his shoulder in the direction of the clock.

"I heard nothing — a mouse behind the wainscoting, perhaps."

"He is as superbly handsome now as when a boy," went on Morris, in a tone of strange discontent. "One could see, as he sat his horse, that he was straight as an Indian." He glanced, perhaps unthinkingly, at his own bowed legs.

"Where did you see him?"

"In the recent encounter. Washington, hearing the firing, galloped to Kip's Bay. He was just in time to see two regiments of the provincials, without having fired a shot, flying before sixty or seventy of the British. He was beside himself at their cowardice; never did I see a man in such a towering rage. Regardless of the bullets that were whistling around him, he stood alone within eighty yards of the enemy, threatening the fugitives with sword and pistol, till one of his officers seized the

bridle of his horse and dragged him from the field. Egad, whatever else may be said of George Washington, he is no coward!" wound up Colonel Morris, with soldierly enthusiasm. Perhaps, if Roger Morris had been a handsome man, he would have been a better man.

"You are old friends, are you not?" queried Frederick Philipse.

"Old — friends," assented the other, in his bluffest tones. "We served together on General Braddock's staff, in the French and Indian campaign. His appearance at Kip's Bay, despite the inevitable changes of years, recalled the last time I saw him, on that awful day of Braddock's defeat. We had fallen into the ambush on the Monongahela; the regulars were flying in every direction; men were being slaughtered like sheep. Washington, heedless that he was the target of all the best marksmen among those howling fiends, that his coat was riddled with bullets, and two horses had been shot from under him, refused to take to cover, lest his example unnerve his men, and towered through the smoke, the very incarnation of physical power. Seizing a field-piece as though it were a fagot, he brought it to bear on a body

of French and Indians, and so, giving a momentary check to the attack, enabled us to beat a disorganized retreat. Not one of us would have been alive to tell the tale if it had not been for George Washington ! ”

“ My recollections of him, though dating at about the same time, are of a widely different character,” observed Philipse. “ On his subsequent journey to Massachusetts to hold conference with Governor Shirley regarding the military precedence, he tarried over night in New York, and Beverly Robinson, who was an old friend and schoolmate, gave a ball in his honor. The following morning, the young Virginian resumed his journey northward. As the gay little cavalcade clattered along the Battery, the company at Beverly’s flocked to the gallery, to call good speed and fling flowers to the departing guests. A rose — I know not from whose hand it fell — Washington deftly caught, and pressed to his lips. He rode a little in advance of the others, on a magnificent white charger, dressed in a uniform of blue and buff, with a scarlet and white cloak flung over his shoulder, and a sword knot of scarlet and gold at his side. As he passed out of sight, he

waved his hand to us — the hand still holding the rose ; and so I have ever borne him in memory. A gallant figure, truly, that might well have been potent in love as in war ! ”

“ Where is the outlet of the passage ? ” asked Colonel Morris, abruptly, apparently wearied of reminiscence.

“ There are two outlets,” answered Philipse, with greater readiness of tone, perhaps convinced by his companion’s representations of the policy of the course to which he had accidentally committed himself. “ The Yonkheer provided a means of escape by both water and land. The outlet at the river end is not far from the stump of an old sycamore-tree, a few feet up the bank, concealed by bushes. Midway of the main passage a branch strikes off to the left ; it had its exit originally between the roots of a large oak. When the ground was cleared for St. John’s Church, although no further danger menaced from the Indians, it was deemed expedient not to block up the passage. A flight of steps was accordingly built into the masonry of the church, leading to a sliding panel in the sacristy.”

“ How is the passage reached from the house ? ”

“From the clock yonder. The back of the case gives way on touching a spring — apparently a screw — in the upper left-hand corner.”

“Good! Nothing could be better for our purpose. It was most opportune that Mr. Washington should desire to pay his respects to the sister of his old friend, and truly amiable of Miss Philipse that she should consent to receive him this afternoon. I will arrange to have Conly and half a dozen men on hand. The river road is in the possession of the provincials, but, by taking the inside road from New York, and striking across the wooded meadows by the Sawmill River, Conly can reach the church, and so gain the passage without danger of discovery.”

“Will six men be enough?” demurred Philipse. “They tell prodigious stories of Washington’s strength.”

“Call it ten, if you like,” rejoined Morris, impatiently. “Your part of the game is to bring him to this room. That is easily managed, as you will naturally wish to offer wine before his departure. Conly will be at the aperture yonder at sharp five of the clock.

Let the signal for his appearance be his Majesty's health. The trap cannot fail."

"You know the old Indian prophecy," said Colonel Philipse, thoughtfully, "'He was not made to be killed by a bullet.'"



"There are missives more unerring than a bullet, more silent than the knife," responded Morris, sententiously. "Mr. Washington will be placed in safe quarters in the *Jersey*, in Wallabout Bay. Let us hope that his gallant figure and potent charm of manner will

not suffer from confinement in the prison ship."

The conversation ceased as the servant entered to remove the soup.

"You are expecting Miss Philipse's return?" queried Colonel Morris, with a courteous display of interest.

"She will be here soon," answered Philipse, glancing mechanically at the clock. "Why, it has stopped!" he exclaimed, and, rising, walked toward the timepiece.

III.

FOLLOWING the other's motion, Colonel Morris turned and glanced over his shoulder; in so doing he thrust out his foot, over which the servant stumbled and fell headlong. The dishes crashed upon the floor, and some of the soup was scattered over Colonel Morris's breeches. In the mishap and its apologies, the attention of both host and guest was diverted from the errant timepiece. The dinner progressed in silence, both gentlemen apparently absorbed in their own thoughts.

Stiff from standing so long in one position, the imminent peril of discovery had made Betsey almost insensible with fright; but, as soon as the immediate danger was averted, physical and mental discomfort were forgotten in the face of the awful danger that menaced General Washington.

She must save him!

But the very intensity of the thought paralyzed further conception, and for a few moments

she stood inanimate as a mummy in its case. Then her brain slowly cleared, and calmly and collectedly she reviewed the situation in all its bearings.

Until recently Betsey had been a child, her healthful, out-of-door life tending to check a precocious mental development. But the stirring events of the past year, the ever-present thought of the danger to which her father and brother were exposed, and the sense of responsibility that was developed, unconsciously, in the absence of those under whose guidance her years would naturally have placed her, — all these influences tended to produce a rapid growth of character, so that, suddenly confronted by an awful responsibility, she was capable of a maturity of judgment and nicety of execution that were beyond her years.

Her first and natural impulse was to intercept General Washington on the river road, which he would undoubtedly follow from Harlem Heights. But the next breath showed her that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to emerge from her present hiding-place, leave the house and gain the river road, without detection, and she must risk no encounter with

Colonel Morris; for, aside from her childish and unreasoning terror, she instinctively felt that those bulging eyes, fixed upon her guilty face, would at once read her cognizance of the deadly plot. The only feasible plan would be to follow the subterranean passage to the river and paddle with all speed to Harlem Heights. General Washington would not, in all probability, leave the camp before three o'clock; as nearly as she could judge, it was now a little past noon. Expert at paddling as she was, she could cover the distance to the encampment in two hours. There would therefore be ample time, and even a considerable margin, in which to convey the warning; and she drew a long breath of relief as she saw the way grow clear before her.

The gentlemen left the room at last; very cautiously, Betsey felt for the spring; the back of the clock slid noiselessly back, revealing, in the light that straggled in through the chinks of the case, a narrow staircase built into the solid walls of the house; carefully closing the door, and with an awful thought of the mice that swarmed behind the wainscoting, she plunged into the darkness below. Even after her eyes had become accustomed to the dim

light of the passage — there were apertures overhead, concealed by the shrubbery on the lawn — the inequalities of the pathway obliged her to grope her way. At last she reached the outlet, and, by the aid of the bushes, scrambled down



the bank to the sycamore stump; her fingers, clumsy with haste, and chilled from contact with the damp walls of the passage, bungled sadly over the cord that secured the canoe. Even after she was fairly afloat, further unconsidered delay tortured her. The tide, strongly

felt for many miles above the mouth of the Hudson, had turned, and, although Betsey kept her light craft in the comparatively still water near the bank of the stream, it was impossible to make rapid headway. More than once she would have laid down the paddle in weariness and despair, had not the thought of the peril that she only could avert nerved her to fresh effort. But, in spite of her utmost endeavor, the accumulated delays consumed the time with frightful rapidity, so that when she reached Spuyten Duyvil, as the confluence of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers was called, the clock in the neighboring hamlet of Kingsbridge struck three. And there were still two miles before her!

At last the canoe shot toward the landing by the camp.

“Who goes there?” challenged the sentinel.

“I am Captain Schuyler’s sister. Take me to him,” panted Betsey.

She told her tale as briefly as possible. Beneath the tan of a year in camp, Philip Schuyler turned white.

“He has gone—and unattended! The devil himself could n’t overtake his Excellency on his

white charger," muttered the young captain of the body-guard. "Come with me to Colonel Hamilton."

He led the way toward the Morris Mansion, and Betsey was ushered into its former drawing-room. At a table in the centre of the apartment sat a boy, writing. He may have been a few years Betsey's senior, but he was not so tall by several inches, and his slight, delicate frame, and a face which, though keen and alert, had not lost the roundness of its early years, added to the impression of extreme youth. A pair of deep-set dark eyes was fixed upon the unexpected visitor, and then the boy threw back his beautifully shaped head, and broke into a peal of apparently irresistible laughter.

Betsey flushed hotly as a sudden vivid picture of her appearance arose before her. Her pretty chintz frock — no longer recognizable — hung in tattered and bedraggled folds that slapped, at every movement, about her ankles ; her hat had been somewhere left behind on her late journey, and, as she impatiently brushed her disheveled hair from out her eyes, her face, dripping with exertion, had become grotesquely streaked and stained with the soil with which her hands were encrusted.

"My sister," announced Captain Schuyler, stiffly; and, turning to Betsey, "Colonel Hamilton," he added, with pointed formality.

"I crave your pardon," said Colonel Hamilton, instantly grave, and, with a low bow, placed a chair for his visitor. Betsey struggled to grasp the fact that this handsome, rude boy was General Washington's confidential secretary and first aid-de-camp. As her brother briefly rehearsed the story, Colonel Hamilton listened in silence, his close-set mouth growing more compressed. At the mention of the prison ship, a fire came into the magnificent eyes that transfigured the whole mobile face.

"Good God; I saw one of those floating hells at the West Indies!" he cried. "The prisoners were packed, like herrings, into a filthy oven in the hold of the vessel, without decent food, or water that was fit to drink, denied even the means of the commonest decency. The poor wretches, cursing, in a breath, heaven and their hellish masters, crippled and distorted with rheumatism, and rotting with putrid fever out of all semblance to humanity, went raving mad, or became drivelling idiots before death at last released them

from their sufferings. *General Washington!*" He shuddered and put his hands before his eyes.

Only for an instant did emotion overmaster. Stepping to a topographical map that hung on the wall,—

"You know the country?" he queried.

"Every inch," answered Captain Schuyler, promptly.

"There are woods in front of the Philipse house?"

"An orchard."

Hamilton went on in rapid direction.

"Detail Morgan and a squad of his riflemen. He is to dispose of them in the orchard; they have learnt the Indian art of making themselves invisible, and the British stand in wholesome awe of their skill as marksmen. Instruct Morgan that when his Excellency displays his handkerchief at the window, instantly to throw himself upon the house. Bid him have a care not to precipitate matters. The evident aim of the conspirators is to secure General Washington alive, but they will not lightly let him slip through their fingers. Conly's name, alone, stamps the character of the plot; he was one

of Brower's men, who, by a miracle, escaped the fate of his mates when they were hanged at Jamaica for their atrocious crimes, of which piracy was the least," concluded the young West Indian. "Report for further orders."

Captain Schuyler saluted and left the room.

"Your brother will mount you to your home," Hamilton went on, turning to Betsey. "Then saddle your own horse and ride on to Manor Hall. At this juncture, you are the only person who can effect entrance without exciting suspicion. Get his Excellency's ear. Say to him — unseen, hark you — that if he hears proposed the health of the King, instantly to display his handkerchief at the window. Remember, it is General Washington's life, the fate of the country itself, that hangs in the balance, and depends upon your prompt and discreet action. Can we rely upon you?"

"Yes," answered the girl, and all her love for her friend seemed compressed into the word. To save General Washington was to save him for Miss Philipse. That had been the guiding thought throughout the intense strain of the past few hours, and its inspiration now strung her aching limbs and over-wrought

nerves to renewed effort. "I will tell Miss Philipse," she added, confidently.

Hamilton started, and in his most imperious tones cried:

"On your life, no! Miss Philipse is at the bottom of the affair!"

"She knows nothing of it!" exclaimed the girl, angrily. "Why, she has been away from home ever since Colonel Morris has been there."

"Exactly; at Col. Beverly Robinson's," rejoined Hamilton, calmly.

"I don't believe it? You don't know her. You have no right to say such a thing!" cried the girl, in a passionate, incoherent outburst. "Miss Philipse could do no wrong!"

With his burning eyes holding the girl in spite of herself, Hamilton, with the grasp and succinctness of the born lawyer, summed up his terrible indictment.

"The Tories are the most implacable and virulent of our enemies. Miss Philipse's Tory sympathies are well known. She is in constant communication with Colonel Robinson, whose house is the headquarters of the Tory element. It is by her appointment that General Washing-

ton visits Manor Hall this afternoon. I have heard mention of an old love affair between her and his Excellency, in which, if report has not garbled, the lady had some reason to hold herself slighted.

“‘Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned,’” quoted Hamilton, who had the reputation of being a scholar. “Moreover,” he added, in his crisp, concise tones, “if the end were merely to crush the provincial cause, the ignominy of the gallows would supply the most effective means. A knowledge of women readily instructs that to destroy an enemy’s good looks is essentially a woman’s revenge,” he concluded, with a touch of youthful braggadocio that would have been amusing under less serious circumstances.

Captain Schuyler returned with the report that Morgan and his men, in their saddles in instant obedience to their leader’s “turkey-call” summons, were already on the road. Betsey left the room with her brother.

“What a hateful, horrid boy!” she exclaimed, before the door had hardly closed behind them.

“Every one either loves or hates Alexander Hamilton,” returned Captain Schuyler.

"Well, I hate him," cried the girl, with a vehemence that was unheedful of the near presence of the object of her dislike.

Never had Betsey's horse sped over the oft-traversed river road at such a pace. Only once did his mistress draw rein. As she neared Kingsbridge, three men suddenly scrambled down the bank, where they had been concealed behind a thicket, playing cards, and held her up. They proved to belong to a body of the neighboring country folk, recently banded together under the leadership of John Paulding, an old farmer of Tarrytown, for the purpose of waging a kind of independent warfare against the British marauders known as "cowboys," who infested the lower stretch of river road, harassing the inhabitants and carrying aid and comfort to the British troops in New York. As one of the men, David Williams by name, was a tenant on the Manor of Philipsburgh, and well known to Betsey, she was speedily on her way again, with the cheery words,—

"We only stop bad people. A pleasant ride to you, Miss Betsey, and my respects to Miss Philipse!"

In former times, there had been many mar-

riages between the English officers stationed at New York,—one of the most important military posts in the colonies,—and the fair Colonial dames, and these alliances were the paramount reason of the present strong Tory influence in the town. At the beginning of the struggle, it was inevitable that there should result much heartburning when, as often happened, the interests of kith and kin, or the oftentimes far stronger bonds of friendship, pulled in one direction, while patriotism and conviction tugged with equal force in the other. But though something of the inner meaning of war had come home to Betsey, this most poignant experience, as of brother raising his hand against brother, she had hitherto been spared. The influence of Miss Philipse was too strong, the conviction of her infallibility too inviolate, to permit any question as to her party sympathies. Besides, “Tory” or “rebel,” she remained Miss Philipse. It was not that Betsey’s faith in her friend was assailed by the cruel words to which she had been forced to listen; girlish loyalty is not lightly shaken. But, in spite of herself, the burning eyes of Alexander Hamilton had laid their ukase upon her thoughts, as well as on



"BETSEY'S HORSE SPED OVER THE OPT-TRAVERSED RIVER ROAD."

her acts and speech, as they were wont to coerce the wills of wiser and stronger people than Betsey.

Truth and loyalty were gone out of the world when Miss Philipse could do wrong.

She had reached, at last, St. John's Church, where, in spite of the commands of Congress, the King's name was still retained in the liturgy. She had turned from the river road, and was galloping along the driveway leading to Manor Hall; there was a glimpse of a figure in blue and buff seated in the embrasure of the drawing-room window, and then she felt the saddle slipping from under her and was flung headlong, her head striking against something hard.

When she recovered consciousness, it was to find herself on a big four-posted bed, with a high tester, and a valance of red and white India patch. A turbaned head was bending over her ankle with some hot embrocation, and there was a queer pungent smell, as of something burning, in the air. Opposite, was a big fireplace faced with quaint Dutch tiles representing scenes from Bible history; an over-

mantel, wrought with arabesques of the English rose, was surmounted by a device of a crowned lion, rampant, rising from a coronet; as Betsey's bewildered gaze strayed to the familiar Philipse



crest, all at once her thoughts grew clear. A wave of recollection spent itself in the cry,—

“General Washington!”

The valance was pushed aside, and Miss Philipse's face, pale and anxious, looked down upon her.

"Don't try to move, dear. Your foot caught in the stirrup, and I am afraid your ankle is sprained."

"General Washington!" repeated the girl, mechanically, her thoughts apparently unable to advance beyond the point where everything had ended in darkness.

"Yes, darling, it was General Washington who carried you here, in his own arms," said Miss Philipse, soothingly. "He saw the accident from the drawing-room window, and was instantly on the spot. Draw the bandage tight, Rose," she directed to the slave woman. "Does it hurt?" she added, bending low over the bed.

But it was not physical pain that wrung the moan from Betsey. Her glance had fallen on the clock upon the mantel shelf. It lacked but five minutes of five o'clock!

General Washington's life—the fate of the country—hung in the balance, and she lay there, helpless! "Not a word to Miss Philipse!" rang the masterful voice.

What, keep silence! with the touch of that soft hand on her forehead, with the beautiful eyes looking lovingly and pityingly into her

own? Straightway Betsey forgot the lesson that had been read her by the youthful master whose intuitive insight and foresight made him one of the marvels of the age; forgot that those who were older and wiser than herself had taken the matter in hand and that it was now her part to obey; forgot the momentous issues that hung upon her action. She only knew that truth and loyalty were in the world, and Miss Philipse could do no wrong!

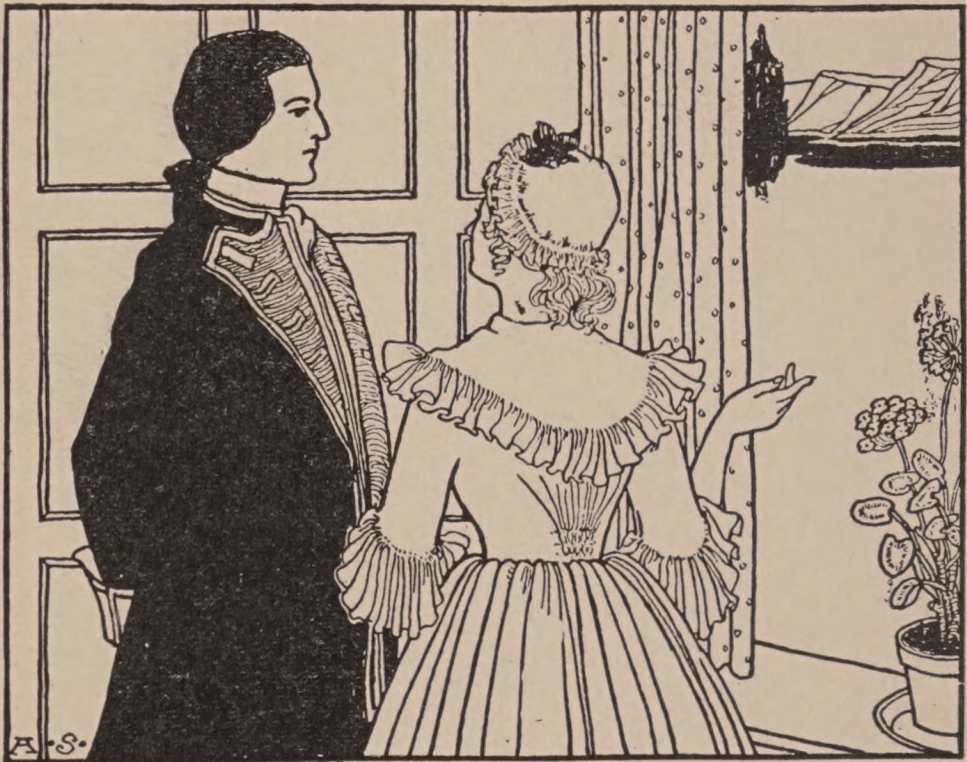
She flung her arms about her friend's neck and whispered. Miss Philipse gave a slight start; a strange, set look came into her face, and then, without query or comment, she swiftly left the room. Through the open door, Betsey heard the murmur of voices in the hall below. Then she distinguished Colonel Philipse's tones, saying,—

“May I be permitted to offer a glass of wine to your Excellency?”

“Will not his Excellency allow me to show him the view from the staircase landing?” suggested Miss Philipse.

Their footsteps ascended the broad, low stairs. It was but a moment that they lin-

gered before the window, for other matters claimed General Washington than a fair scene of water and woodland. Had Miss Philipse opportunity to voice the warning, with her brother and Colonel Morris intent



in the hall below? Would Colonel Morgan be on time — would he see the signal? And somewhere, in her inmost consciousness, the warning words of Alexander Hamilton rang with dizzy pertinacity. Miss Philipse and the three gentlemen went into the dining-

room and their voices were no longer audible from above.

The wine was poured. Frederick Philipse raised his glass.

"His Majesty, the King!"

IV.

WASHINGTON turned and placed his untasted glass upon the window-seat. As he did so, there was an almost imperceptible movement of his left hand toward the breast-pocket of his coat.

Hardly had the toast left the lips of Frederick Philipse, when the door of the clock was flung violently back and a redcoated figure stepped through the aperture; another, and yet another, till half a score of armed men stood drawn up in line, passively awaiting orders.

Colonel Morris advanced a step or two. Something held him from farther approach.

"I trust you see that resistance is useless," he said. "Mr. Washington, you are my prisoner!"

Washington stood silent and motionless, one hand behind his back, the other resting on the hilt of his sword. But he was not good for his foes to look upon.

It was not alone that the high temper nearly broke loose and ran uncontrolled at the aspect of the broken troth plight of hospitality, sacred to the Virginian as to the Norseman of old, and of the cowardice that would overwhelm a defenceless man with numbers. At the sight of the armed men, there had arisen the fighting spirit, before which even savage warriors had quailed, the indomitable eagerness for the fray, the love of battle for battle's sake, that flowed in his veins with the hot blood of his race—of those far-off Norman de Wessyngtons. The veins stood out on his temples, the blue-gray eyes grew clear and dark, with the glint of steel, the jaw was more firmly set, the massive figure towered with the force that, far back in the centuries, had stood in the forefront of battle and wrested for itself, by the spirit of all that is boldest and worthiest in man, the “divine right” of kings!

The iron will had reasserted its mastery.

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen,” said Washington, imperturbably, “but you are my prisoners!”

There was the sudden trample of many feet in the hall without, and into the room trooped a

score of big men, in fringed hunting-shirts and with levelled rifles.

“If you decide to remain, I will give you all the protection in my power,” said Washington.

Miss Philipse shook her head, gravely and sadly.

“How could I accept the protection of one who is in arms against my King?” she answered, with the gentle dignity, the sweet and serious simplicity, that belonged to her.

“Colonel Morris and your brother shall be released on their paroles,” continued Washington; “but I should not be doing my duty if I suffered Colonel Philipse to remain at Philipsburgh. The Hudson is the key to the whole situation; I cannot endanger its possession.”

There was no suggestion of rancor in his tones. Although treachery, like cowardice, was something he could not understand, his magnanimity was greater than his scorn. He was pacing the room to and fro, as was his habit when deeply perturbed.

“I could not remain in a land where the name of my King must no more be mentioned, even in prayer. If we could reach our friends

in New York, they would assist us to England. John Williams, our faithful steward, will remain here and care for the estate," said Miss Philipse. She spoke quietly and collectedly, as though the words were the result of some long foreseen contingency. "Years ago, it was foretold us, 'Your possessions shall pass from you, when the eagle shall despoil the lion of his mane.' The mysterious words have grown clear; for from the hour you drew your sword beneath the Cambridge elm, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, I knew that these Colonies were lost to King George forever!"

They had withdrawn to the upper chamber to hold their brief parting conference, forgetting or disregarding of the child's presence on the bed. Too full of love, and sorrow, and reverence for tears; feeling vaguely that she was in the presence of something that was beyond her girlish understanding, Betsey listened, perforce, to the words that followed, but with no more taint of curiosity than the guardian angels listen. She might have let the valance veil her sight, but there her strength failed her. Foreboding, soon deepened to certainty, lay heavily upon

her heart, that the time in which she could look upon her beloved friend was fast drawing to a close. She plucked back a corner of the curtain, and gazed hungrily upon every detail of a picture whose memory must last her forever.

Miss Philipse stood at one end of the fireplace, with a hand resting lightly on the mantel shelf. She was dressed in a delicate blue and white copperplate calico, with a muslin apron, over a flounced petticoat of blue lutestring; a half handkerchief, knotted with straw ribbons, was folded, kerchiefwise, over her breast; her hair, drawn back in loose waves from her lovely pale face, was partially concealed beneath a frilled muslin cap, from which soft dark curls drooped low in the neck behind.

Washington stood at the other end of the fireplace, in the prime of his magnificent manhood.

"You have saved my life at the cost of your beloved home," he said, at length, in low, strained tones.

"I would have saved your life at the cost of my own!" returned Mary Philipse, and, for the first time, there was a tremor in her voice.

Her downcast eyes were raised slowly, as though impelled by an irresistible impulse, and

through a mist met his own, in which the pensive look had deepened to sadness. It was by a supreme effort of the iron will that Washington held the distance between them.

"I thought to find you the wife of Roger Morris," he said, quietly.

"I have given no man the right to hold me in his thoughts as wife," answered Mary Philipse, slowly and wonderingly.

There was a deadly stillness in Washington's voice when its tones again broke the silence.

"That night — do you remember — we danced the minuet together, I asked your permission to wait upon you on my return from Boston. Despite my utmost urgencies, when I arrived again at the house of Beverly Robinson, I was three little days too late. You had returned to Manor Hall, and your sister told me of your betrothal to Roger Morris, yesterday's consummation of a long-standing family compact."

"Susannah is dead," said Mary Philipse, softly. "It was the dearest wish of her heart to see the Jumel place added to the Manor of Philipsburgh." A subtle echo rang in the words that lay not in their spoken sense — "May Heaven forgive her, and help me to forgive

her!" "Shortly after, I heard of your marriage with the Widow Custis," she added, presently.

"She has been a good and faithful wife to me. God knows my heart has never strayed from her," said Washington, simply.

There was a silence that was long in the reckoning that is not of minutes. Then each looked into the other's face, as they look who may not look again, and to the words that were wrung from them, the child and the angels listened.

"As I passed beneath the gallery, you flung a rose to me!"

"As you passed out of sight, you waved your hand to me!"

There was no tremor in the gentle tones, and no mist dimmed the light — finer and purer and higher than even the love light of long ago — in the beautiful eyes, as Mary Philipse spoke her farewell words.

"I saw you, even then, one on whom God had laid His consecrating hand. I see you now, the great soldier who shall fight this war to a successful issue. I shall see you the statesman, standing at the head of the nation he has done more than any other man to make, silent amidst

every difficulty, firm before every onslaught, aiming at no other ends than his country's, his God's and truth's. May my prayers shield you and aid you, even in your high estate! More than all, I shall see you, as I have always seen you,—for did any human being ever bate one jot of his faith in you!—the pure, high-minded gentleman, of dauntless courage and stainless honor. God grant I may not die, till I see the land, for which you have fought and toiled, in the foremost rank of nations.”

He bent his head low over her outstretched hand.

“God be with you,” he said.

V.

THE neighborhood of the lower Hudson was again the scene of active warfare, and Betsey's continued sojourn at the summer home was inexpedient, if not dangerous. Fortunately, at this juncture, General Schuyler was appointed to the command of the northern army, and as his headquarters were at the family mansion in Albany, he was enabled to relieve his anxiety concerning his little daughter by transferring her thither. Here, busied with the many and varied cares of a large household, three years passed.

Late one afternoon in midsummer, Betsey's little negro maid, Marian, came to her mistress's bedroom with the tidings that a guest had arrived, who would sup and spend the night.

"Let the squirrel pasty and the haunch of cold venison be served," directed Betsey. "I prepared a sufficient variety of cakes this morning, and there is an abundance of hickory and other nuts cracked. Fresh strawberries and

wild grape jelly will no doubt be welcome to a traveller, and the compote of our ground cherry may not be amiss to one who knows not the flavor of that rare fruit. You heard not his name, Marian?"

"He is called Colonel Hamilton," answered the girl.

Betsey started and dropped her bunch of keys, which in housewifely fashion was suspended from her girdle.

"Was he short and slight, but of rare grace and activity; had he burning dark eyes — eyes that once seen could never be forgotten?" she questioned, eagerly.

"That is he," returned the maid. "You know him, then?" she added, with deep interest.

The little slave girl, when three years old, had been given to Betsey as a birthday present; in the close companionship of the succeeding years, there had grown up between mistress and maid a degree of familiarity in which, on the one side, a care and protection that held no suggestion of the harsh rule of authority was met, on the other, by a single-hearted devotion that made its mistress's interests its own.

Betsey had matured rapidly in the past three years ; her domestic responsibilities, her close contact with the stirring life of the times, as the daughter of one of the leaders of the Revolution, the frequent visits at the Schuyler mansion of men whose minds were making their impress upon the age, had all contributed to this result. But she was still a girl in years, and the need of a youthful confidant was sometimes imperative.

“ I saw him but once,” she answered ; “ ’t was years ago ; doubtless he has forgotten. Tell me, Marian, am I not much changed since we came to Albany ? ” she went on, drawing herself to her full height. “ I am taller, my face is not so round ; this fashion of dressing my hair over a cushion gives me quite a different air, does it not ? ”

Marian regarded her mistress dubiously.

“ In that white jaconet muslin, with the frill of scalloped lace about your neck, and the bright morone sash, you look just as you did three years ago,” she answered, decidedly. “ In the blue brocade, now, you are such a stately dame that I am sure no one would know you who may have seen you in New York.”

“Then fetch me the blue brocade, Marian,” cried Betsey. “Doubtless Colonel Hamilton comes on an official mission, and I would show him all the attention that is due his Excellency’s special envoy, and not less his own distinguished merits, for, notwithstanding his youth, ’t is said that Alexander Hamilton does the thinking of the times.”

Her toilet completed, Betsey regarded herself critically in the mirror. The blue brocade, with its pointed stomacher, opened in front over a long trained skirt of crimson satin, without vanity, became her right well; the green morocco slippers with the high heels added a good inch to her height, and the two little half-moon patches — one on her cheek and the other on her forehead — gave an air of the mode that would surely dispel any possible vague recollection of a dirty-faced little girl. But —

“I fear I do not look so very old, after all; not nearly so old as did Aunt Schuyler in this very gown,” she sighed.

“Madam Schuyler was a very old lady — nearly fifty years old when she died,” rejoined Marian. “But perhaps I made a mistake in suggesting the brocade,” she added, regard-

ing her mistress critically. "Your eyes are brighter than usual, and your cheeks are very red!"

"I will endeavor to add ten, twenty years to my age by the dignity of my demeanor, and the gravity of my speech! The late surrender of Burgoyne and the proceedings of Congress will afford becoming themes. 'Tis the fashion in Albany not to rise in receiving company; in New York, they are wont to greet a guest in different wise. I would not that Colonel Hamilton think we know nothing of courtly ways in our little provincial town." Betsey swept a low curtsy to her own reflection in the glass.

"Colonel Hamilton comes, then, from New York?" queried Marian.

"He came there, at an early age, from Jamaica."

"*Jamaica!*"

Marian dropped the jaconet gown she was smoothing out, and her eyeballs rolled up till a ghastly extent of white appeared.

"Why should not Colonel Hamilton be born in Jamaica, or anywhere else if he so pleases!" exclaimed Betsey, impatiently.

"Jamaica — bad place!" chattered the girl.

“You foolish child! Bad people *go* to Jamaica, they do not *come* from there!” cried Betsey.

But this was too fine a distinction for the little slave girl’s comprehension. Her knees shook beneath her, and her face had a hideous livid pallor.

“I am ashamed of you, Marian!” said Betsey, severely. “Could you not read in Colonel Hamilton’s eyes that he would wittingly do no one harm, even in thought? Those eyes belie him sorely, if, despite the occasional self-sufficiency of youth, he could ever be aught but the just and generous gentleman.”

But Marian, muttering something that may have been either an attempt at self-exculpation, or an incoherent expression of terror, slipped from the room. Betsey, supposing she had gone to the kitchen, to aid, as usual, in the preparation of the supper, soon followed. Absorbed in her own thoughts, she did not notice the absence of the usual servants about the hall or corridors. To her surprise, the kitchen was empty! A survey of the outbuildings, and a glance from their several windows, revealed no one in sight. The recollection of Marian’s

fright dispelled the momentary mystification. The servants had taken flight in a body, before the spell of that terrible word, Jamaica !

General Schuyler had been suddenly called away on some official errand, leaving his guest on the portico to await his early return. The portico at the Flats — as the Schuyler estate was called — was the most characteristic feature of the house. The dining-room — or eating-room, as it was usually called — was a sunless apartment, hung with Scripture paintings of a gloomy tenor, and was used only when the exigencies of the weather compelled. The portico was not only, from early summer, the living-room of the family, but was also drawing-room and dining-room. It was open at the sides, while overhead a light latticework, covered with the luxurious growth of a wild grapevine, afforded protection from the sun. A seat ran around the sides, and on a long, narrow shelf above a number of birds' nests were arranged. Numerous birds of a bright cinnamon brown color were darting hither and thither in the flickering sunlight, or rustling about in the foliage overhead ; others were gliding over the table with a butterfly or a cherry

in their bills with which to feed their young, who were chirping from the nests on the shelf, or from out the shelter of the leafy roof. Several of the tame little creatures were hopping about the bench by the stranger's side, or venturing inquisitively upon his knees and arms. He sat motionless, watching their movements intently.

The chirping of innumerable insects mingled with the twittering of the wrens; the lowing of the cows, wending their homeward way from the common, sounded from beyond the garden; leading thence to the village street was a long avenue, bordered by Morella cherry-trees, which were evidently regarded by the birds as their especial storehouse. A wren, with a particularly fine cherry dangling from its bill, let go its hold prematurely, and the fruit fell into Hamilton's hand, as it lay palm upward, upon his knee; involuntarily the hand closed, and the wren, instantly lighting upon it, cocked his head to one side, and, in a storm of vituperative twitterings, gave vent to his anger and indignation at this bold-faced robbery. Hamilton threw back his head with the gesture that betrayed his youth, and laughed aloud.

A charming figure appeared in the doorway in a stately garb that accentuated the graceful outlines and girlish bloom of its wearer. Betsey's steps were nicely balanced, and her face was preternaturally grave, with two little frowning



lines between the brows, brought there partly by the provoking domestic exigency, and partly by the difficulty of managing a train whilst carrying a pasty that plainly needed both hands for its support.

“Let me help you!” cried Hamilton, and sprang to her aid.

One on each side, the pasty was set upon the table. Hamilton fell back a step or two.

“I have the honor of addressing Miss Schuyler?” he said, with a low bow. “We have met before.”

The stately curtsy seemed ignominiously out of place. Betsey’s equanimity, already sorely tried, was unequal to a reply in courtly phrase, and only her native honesty dictated her answer.

“I thought — I hoped you had forgotten!”

“I had not forgotten,” returned Hamilton, quietly. “It was, indeed, my unofficial mission to Albany to tell you that I erred grievously at our former meeting,” he went on, in his simple, direct fashion, the exponent of a magnanimity of which only a proud, upright nature, self-convicted of error, is capable. “I crave your pardon for the wrong I did your friend.”

But a hard, cold look had come into Betsey’s loyal blue eyes that boded ill for Hamilton’s petition. And he, partly because of the pure integrity of a nature that could not rest content with a wrong unrighted, though committed only in thought, partly because of the imperious

will that brooked no opposition to its ungarnished yea or nay, went on in the tones, irresistibly winning, that could wring assent from the most stubborn adversary.

“Philip told me how she saved General Washington’s life, knowing well what the cost would be. All that night I heard his Excellency pacing his room; even I, his most trusted friend, dared not approach. Afterward, as you know, when Colonel Philipse broke his parole and was attainted for treason, she was unjustly included in the sentence, and the Manor of Philipsburgh was confiscated by Congress. I was not behind General Washington in the endeavor to right the cruel wrong. Letter after letter was written; but in vain his Excellency expostulated, urged, condemned; in vain I put his representations into the strongest, most convincing words at my command. I journeyed to Philadelphia to hold personal conference with Congress; but in its fatuity, its self-sufficiency, its bat-like opposition to every measure proposed by Washington, because, forsooth, they fancy him aiming at supreme power,—Miss Philipse, the one woman out of the records of the time, must stand, forever, as traitor! Be-

lieve me, all that man could do I have done. If I judged harshly, precipitately, cruelly, if love of my friend made me, for the moment, unlovely toward yours, will you not forgive me for a horrid, hateful boy?"

He spoke with the clear, calm reason, the temperate self-assertion of maturity; yet it was less the direct appeal of his words than that which rang in his tones, — the flawless generosity of a nature incapable of harboring resentment, by which Betsey stood all at once convicted before the court of conscience of an unjust and paltry grudge; and the echo of her own childish, passionate words added to the weight of the self-accusation.

But the rankling memory of the laugh at the ragged, dirty-faced little girl was not readily assuaged. Forgiveness might come by and by; but for the present, — well, for the present, she must set before him the daintiest fare her housewifely stores afforded, and herself serve him at table as an honored guest.

"Our servants have fled," she said, demurely. "My father will soon, doubtless, be able to persuade them to return; but, meantime, will you pardon me if household duties call me?"

“They have not run away?” queried Hamilton, perhaps with some vague reminiscence of the life of the negro slaves in the West Indies.

“I think they have gone no further than a clearing in the Bush, a few miles from here, where a settler has been wont to receive them kindly. Our people are warmly attached to us; it is seldom, indeed, that any one in Albany has an unruly servant; but when all gentle means have failed to win such a one to better courses, he is sold to Jamaica. And the dread of that fate amongst the negroes is so great that they have to be carefully watched on the boat to New York, lest they attempt self-destruction. Jamaica stands to them for I know not what of horror; so — they are very ignorant, very foolish — when they heard that you were from Jamaica —”

“Instead of their going to Jamaica, it was Jamaica coming to them,” finished Hamilton. “I crave your pardon, again, for having unwittingly brought such panic into your household.”

It might be that she had erred as grievously as the servants in her conception of Alexander Hamilton. Perhaps she would forgive him,

quite, before his departure. She was glad he was to remain but one night — almost.

The following morning Betsey was early upon the portico. It was her custom, before the round of daily household duties began, to gather a supply of cherries, and place a portion beside each nest on the shelf ; the chirping and twittering that followed told that her ministrations were appreciated. She had scarcely finished her task, when Hamilton appeared, booted and spurred for an early journey.

“It has been an unusually hot summer,” explained Betsey ; “our wrens’ wings have drooped sadly with the heat and the difficulty of finding food ; so I have been helping them. Hark, do you hear that !” she exclaimed, eagerly, and held up her finger to enjoin silence.

It was the notes of a bird, exquisitely modulated, rising from a few single notes, seemingly shaken from its throat like dewdrops from the heart of a rose, and swelling into a sustained volume of melody, of wonderful compass and variety ; the song died away as it had begun, in the crystal clear, scattered notes.

“It is unlike the song of any bird I ever heard !” cried Betsey, breathlessly. “It sang



“HARK, DO YOU HEAR THAT?”

for hours in the moonlight last night, as I lay awake."

"It is a mocking-bird," explained Hamilton. "I did not know that it built so far north as this latitude. That is its call note," he added, as a single long, mournful note sounded from the upper branches of a tree in the garden.

"There must be a nest there!"

"Doubtless; 't is the breeding season."

"I wish the tree were not so high. I should much like to see the eggs," said Betsey, wistfully.

"I will get one for you," volunteered Hamilton.

"Oh, but indeed you must not!" cried Betsey. "We never allow our birds to be molested; they always know if an egg has been touched, and are most indignant at the outrage. I am afraid the mocking-bird would leave us if its nest were disturbed. Besides, you might get hurt yourself, and — and his Excellency would be so very sorry!"

"My spurs will serve as spike nails," returned Hamilton; "there are usually five eggs. They can surely spare us one."

"I should like much to have that glorious song where I could hear it through our long

winter. Perhaps, if I had the egg — ” hesitated Betsey.

Hamilton was already in the garden. He soon returned and placed a small egg in Betsey’s eagerly outstretched hand.

“How pretty, how charming it is !” she cried. “See how the lovely pale green is flecked and splashed with the dainty brown !”

“Blue, is it not ?” queried Hamilton.

His head and Betsey’s nearly touched as they bent together over the egg. Very gently, Hamilton placed his hand beneath hers that he might more closely scrutinize the debated color.

“I think it is green,” repeated Betsey, weighing her words. “In this light, so, is it not ?” Her blue eyes were raised, gravely, to Hamilton’s face.

“In Albany, blue is the fairer color,” he answered, smiling. “I have not heard a mocking-bird since I left Jamaica,” he added.

“Jamaica must be a beautiful land with such music to fill the nights,” said Betsey, with a gentle inflection in her voice that held more than the spoken query ; and it was tone rather than words that Hamilton answered.

The sunlight flickered through the foliage overhead, dancing over her simple muslin gown, and touching the broad, fair forehead, from which the little sunbonnet had been pushed in the heat. Now and again a wren lit on her shoulder, or hopped upon her arm, with grateful twitterings. Hamilton stood by her side, his hand still aiding hers to support the weight of the egg.

“To me, as to your servants, Jamaica was ever the land of slavery,” he made answer, gravely. “While I would willingly have risked my life, though not my character, to exalt my station, my fortune condemned me to the grovelling occupation of a clerk. As I was but twelve years of age, I realized that my youth stood in the way of immediate preferment, but I determined to prepare the way for futurity.”

“And the time came?” questioned Betsey, softly.

“The time came at last,” assented Hamilton, with his transfiguring smile. “My relatives deemed a slight essay from my pen on one of our tropical hurricanes not unworthy of commendation, and they decided that I should be

given the advantages of an education. Accordingly, I took ship for Boston, and soon after arrived in New York and entered King's College. Fifteen months or less would have sufficed to carry me through the course, but the war broke out, and I left my books to offer my services to the provincial cause."

"Then you are quite, quite alone?" queried Betsey, with unfeigned interest and sympathy.

"My mother died early, and my father, whom I never knew, left me to the care of distant relatives. As a child, I had but one companion of my own age."

"It is sad to be alone," said Betsey, seriously. "Never did children, I am sure, grow up in such joyous companionship as we in Albany. From the time we were five or six years old, we were divided into little companies of some twenty boys and girls, who shared with one another all their games and diversions, all their joys and sorrows—if indeed, we then knew aught of sorrow! We seemed like the members of one large family. Indeed, I think there is scarce a person in Albany who is not called 'cousin' by every one else, although it may oft happen that the kinship is somewhat remote or obscure."

"I have no cousins of my own," said Hamilton. "Why should not we be cousins? I should like to be your cousin," he repeated, eagerly.

"I am sure I should like very well to have you for my cousin," returned Betsey, simply.

Impetuous in his wooing as over his books, or in storming a redoubt, Hamilton raised her hand to his lips.

"You don't hate me — now?" he questioned, softly.

"Not now," she whispered.

In the following spring, Hamilton journeyed to Albany again, this time upon a mission of a different character. He and Betsey parted, not as cousins, but as betrothed lovers; and in December of the same year, at the little Dutch church by the river, Betsey Schuyler was married to Alexander Hamilton.

THE END.

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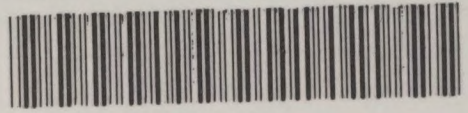
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